

WE CLAIM:

1. A portable electronic device comprising:

a main housing having opposite front and rear ends,
and a top surface provided with a keyboard unit thereon,
5 said keyboard unit including a set of control keys, each
of said control keys being operable so as to enable said
portable electronic device to execute a control function
associated with an operated one of said control keys;

a cover body having a coupling side, and opposite
10 first and second surfaces, said first surface being
provided with a display panel thereon;

a pivot unit coupled to said rear end of said main
housing and said coupling side of said cover body such
that said cover body is pivotable about a longitudinal
15 axis, which is parallel to said top surface of said main
housing, and about a vertical axis transverse to said
top surface of said main housing, thereby permitting
operation of said portable electronic device in one of
a first mode, where an angle is formed between said top
20 surface of said main housing and said first surface of
said cover body and where said cover body permits access
to said keyboard unit, and a second mode, where said
cover body is superimposed on said main housing such
that said second surface of said cover body faces toward
25 said top surface of said main housing and such that said
cover body denies access to said keyboard unit; and
a virtual control key module for configuring said

display panel to show a set of simulated control keys thereon, said simulated control keys having distinct functions assigned thereto and being available for selection so as to enable said portable electronic device to execute the function associated with a selected one of said simulated control keys.

2. The portable electronic device as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said display panel is a touch-control display panel, and selection among said simulated control keys is conducted by pressing of said touch-control display panel at a location registered with a selected one of said simulated control keys.

3. The portable electronic device as claimed in Claim 1, wherein selection among said simulated control keys shown on said display panel is conducted using an external mouse device coupled electrically to said portable electronic device.

4. The portable electronic device as claimed in Claim 1, further comprising a keyboard controller coupled electrically to said keyboard unit, and a register coupled electrically to said keyboard controller for storing operating status of an activated one of said control keys on said keyboard unit and an updated control result associated with the activated one of said control keys on said keyboard unit therein, and wherein said virtual control key module is loaded with a virtual key generating program for configuring said display panel

to show said simulated control keys thereon when said virtual key generating program is executed, and includes a trunk interface coupled electrically to said register, said trunk interface being provided with a set of execution paths corresponding to the functions assigned to said simulated control keys;

the function corresponding to a selected one of said simulated control keys being executed through one of said execution paths corresponding to the selected one of said simulated control keys, operating status and an updated control result associated with the selected one of said simulated control keys being stored in said register via said one of said execution paths corresponding to the selected one of said simulated control keys.

5. The portable electronic device as claimed in Claim 4, wherein the execution paths vary according to the functions assigned to said simulated control keys shown on said display panel.